

What Is the Cosmic Entity?

It has been established that Brahma exists and also that It is Paramátman, Bhúmácaetanya, Universal Consciousness or Consciousness in its totality.

Bhúmácaetanya or Cosmic Consciousness or Consciousness in its totality is also known as Citishakti or Puruśa. It was also explained earlier that Prakṛti is a principle or a unique energy or force of Puruśa (Consciousness) and that She also qualifies Puruśa. Prakṛti is a principle of Puruśa and She is always so intimately bound up with him that it is impossible to separate the two. They are inseparable like fire and its burning property. Just as these two cannot be separated, Puruśa and Prakṛti can also never be separated. Prakṛti is the unique force, the qualifying principle of Puruśa. A force or principle which gives something a characteristic or property, cannot be separated from it. Similarly although Puruśa and Prakṛti are two distinct entities, they cannot be separated. So Puruśa is bound to be present wherever there is Prakṛti, and the collective term for them is Brahma.

Puruśa we know is Jīṇána, Caetanya or Consciousness. From these terms we can understand the existence of something but cannot visualize any figure or form. We can only form an idea of Puruśa or Caetanya with the help of our bhávaná (introversial flow of our objective mind). So Puruśa or Caetanya is an abstract entity and can be appreciated by our mind only in objective expression. Prakṛti, the qualifying principle of this abstract entity, can also only be understood as an energy, force or principle which cannot be seen even though it qualifies the crudest of things. Its form or shape cannot be described. Fire is a crude object and its attribute, the burning principle, is also a crude quality. Yet even this attribute cannot be seen. However crude the attribute of a thing may be, it will always be subtle in form. An energy or principle can never have a shape. It cannot be seen or heard. Prakṛti, also a unique force, a principle, is a subtle entity. Puruśa and Prakṛti are both subtle. Brahma, the collective name for these two, is also subtle and can only be appreciated in the final stage of the mind's merger in its source. Brahma could not, therefore, have any form or shape. It would not be possible to describe It or even to say what It looks like. Brahma must be shapeless or formless. It really cannot have a form.

It was said earlier that buddhitattva comes into being as a result of the influence of the sattvaguṇa of Prakṛti on the unit consciousness or átman. Ahaṁtattva is formed due to influence of rajoguṇa on buddhitattva, and lastly, citta is the result of the influence of tamoguṇa on ahaṁtattva. The formation of citta is dependent on ahaṁtattva, as it comes into being only as a result of the influence of tamoguṇa on ahaṁtattva. The existence of citta is, therefore, not independent. If the tamoguṇa of Prakṛti does not influence ahaṁtattva or if ahaṁtattva ceases to exist, citta cannot be formed. But the absence of citta would not mean the absence of ahaṁtattva and Prakṛti. It only means that the tamoguṇa of Prakṛti is not influencing ahaṁtattva and that the

existence of ahaṁtattva does not depend on the presence or absence of citta. It is independent of citta. If we apply the same reasoning to ahaṁtattva we can see that it is dependent on the influence of the rajoguṇa of Prakṛti over buddhitattva. But the existence of buddhitattva does not depend on the presence or absence of ahaṁtattva. Buddhitattva is independent of ahaṁtattva. Similarly, the existence of buddhitattva depends on the influence of the sattvaguṇa of Prakṛti on unit consciousness. But the existence of unit consciousness is independent of buddhitattva. For example, steel can be moulded to form a steel pan, but that does not mean that, if the pan does not exist, steel will also not exist. As the pan is made of steel it is dependent on steel, but steel would exist even if there were no pan. The existence of steel is therefore independent of the existence of the pan. Similarly unit consciousness is independent of buddhitattva. All the different forms from citta to buddhitattva are dependent on unit consciousness, as the existence of each one of these is dependent on the other. But when we come to consciousness we can see that its existence is not dependent on any of these forms. In fact we cannot find anything on which the existence of consciousness depends. Consciousness is therefore absolutely independent.

Consciousness or Puruṣa is absolutely independent. It was seen in the preceding paragraph that it is not dependent on anything and has no beginning or root cause. It is non-causal. Prakṛti is the qualifying principle of Puruṣa and is bound to be present wherever Puruṣa exists. This, however, does not mean that Prakṛti has been created by Puruṣa. The burning quality of fire is its qualifying principle and always exists wherever there is fire. Yet this quality has not been created by fire. Just as fire cannot create its qualifying principle, Puruṣa also cannot create Prakṛti, His qualifying principle. Puruṣa is even incapable of realizing His own existence without the qualifying influence of Prakṛti. Such a Puruṣa can surely never create Prakṛti. Just as in the case of Puruṣa, the origin of or cause for the creation of Prakṛti cannot be found. Prakṛti is also non-causal. Puruṣa and Prakṛti are thus both non-causal. Brahma is the combined name for Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Hence Brahma is certainly non-causal.

Brahma is without any beginning or root cause. It has no origin. But does Brahma have an end? If It does, we should find out how big it is. In order to find this out we will have to measure Brahma. Different instruments are required to measure different things. For instance, to measure land we need rods and chains; to measure food-grains we require scales and weights. We have to use a thermometer to measure temperature and a barometre to measure atmospheric pressure. The instrument required depends on the nature of the thing to be measured. Brahma is subtle and is only an ideological expression as we already have seen. The instrument required to measure Brahma has to be subtle. Something subtler than Brahma must be found to measure it.

All matter in this world can be classified into five rudimental factors or tattvas. It may exist as ákasha (ethereal), váyu (aerial), agni (luminous), jala (liquid), or kṣiti (solid). The presence of tanmátras distinguishes something crude from something subtle. A crude thing will always have

tanmátras, while a subtle thing will not have any. So anything containing a larger number of tanmátras will be cruder. There are five tanmátras: shabda (sound), sparsha (touch), rúpa (form), rasa (taste) and gandha (smell). Ákasha or the ethereal factor or the supposed subtle atmosphere beyond the atmospheres of the planets, etc., contains nothing which can be visualized. Yet it carries shabda tanmátra and is called crude. Váyu has two tanmátras – shabda and sparsha. That is, váyu carries sound and may also be felt. Váyu is thus cruder than ákasha. Agni, jala and kṣiti are all still cruder, as they can be seen; they have rúpa tanmátra in addition to the other tanmátras. Therefore all the five rudimental factors or tattvas in which matter can exist are crude. None of these could make an instrument subtle enough to measure Brahma, which is a subtle entity.

In these five rudimental factors, that is, ákasha, váyu, agni, jala and kṣiti, there is another element present apart from matter. This other element is mind or antahkaraṇa (introversial psychic force). Applying the same test to mind as we did to tanmátras, we find that mind is subtle. Only mind can be abstract; it cannot be found to contain any tanmátras. That is, mind alone is subtle and everything else in this universe is crude. Mind, therefore, is the only thing out of which an instrument for measuring Brahma can be prepared, but since mind has no tanmátras, no crude or physical form can be attributed to it. It cannot be heard, touched, seen, tasted or even smelt. In the absence of these qualities an instrument cannot be made out of mind. Mind is subtle and only has the qualities of grasping an idea, thinking and feeling. These are the ways mind can measure Brahma.

Mind is made up of buddhitattva, ahaṁtattva and citta. Buddhitattva is formed by Prakṛti qualifying unit consciousness; ahaṁtattva comes into being due to the further influence of Prakṛti over buddhitattva. Similarly citta comes into existence being qualified by Prakṛti. Ahaṁtattva is that part of the mind which works. The capacity to perform any action is only in ahaṁtattva. Hence if Brahma is to be measured by the mind it will have to be done by ahaṁtattva. Buddhitattva separates unit consciousness and ahaṁtattva. Ahaṁtattva will thus not be able to reach unit consciousness unless it passes through buddhitattva. But ahaṁtattva is only a functional form of buddhitattva. The “I” of “I exist” of buddhitattva, becomes ahaṁtattva when it adopts the function of “I work.” The moment Ahaṁtattva reverts to buddhitattva, the functional identity of “I work” of ahaṁtattva ceases to exist. Ahaṁtattva cannot merge in unit consciousness as ahaṁtattva. It must be converted into buddhitattva before coming into contact with unit consciousness, and in that state it cannot perform any function, far less that of measuring unit consciousness. As mind is incapable of coming in contact with unit consciousness, it can never measure it. Brahma is the collective name for all the unit consciousnesses. Mind cannot measure a single unit consciousness; so the question of measuring the supreme multiple of all the multiplicities of unit consciousness does not arise. Mind can never think, feel or grasp any idea of the size of Brahma.

Mind can only determine the boundaries of something which is within its scope. It cannot set limits to a thing which is beyond its reach. The creation is only a part of Brahma. (This will be explained in the following chapter). Mind exists within this creation. On withdrawing mind (aham̐tattva) to its limits we still find something left beyond it, which it has no capacity to comprehend. Creation thus extends beyond the limits of mind. Although not infinite, it is vishála or huge beyond our capacity to measure it. Creation is only a part of Brahma, and if a part can be vishála, Brahma, the whole which contains it, must be infinite or viráá.

The combined name for Puruśa and Prakrti is Brahma. It was seen earlier that both Puruśa and Prakrti are non-causal. Naturally if they are both non-causal it means that they are also independent of each other. Neither of them is subordinate to the other. The state of Brahma where both Puruśa and Prakrti are independent, because they are non-causal, is the supreme state of Brahma or Brahmasvarúpa. Prakrti is a principle or a unique force, the function of which is to attribute guńa or to qualify Puruśa. Guńa ordinarily means an attribute or a qualification. In Sanskrit, guńa means a rope used for tying something. To attribute guńa means to bind with a rope. Prakrti qualifying or attributing guńa to Puruśa means Prakrti is binding Puruśa with a rope and driving Puruśa according to Her designs and wishes. But in the supreme state of Brahmasvarúpa, Puruśa is independent. Hence Prakrti cannot qualify or bring Puruśa under bondage; still Prakrti exists there with Puruśa, as Brahma is a combined name for them. Those asleep are incapable of using their facilities or capacity to work. They are inactive in that stage. Yet they still have capacity to work. Similarly, Prakrti is inactive in Brahmasvarúpa. She does not perform functions or is unable to perform them. The function of Prakrti is to qualify or to attribute guńa to Puruśa. Puruśa does not acquire any attributes or qualifications when Prakrti does not function. Then He is beyond guńa or without guńa.

How is it that Prakrti, whose only function is to qualify Puruśa, does not influence or is unable to qualify Puruśa in Nirguńa Brahma? There can be only two reasons for this: Prakrti is either asleep and hence inactive or is weaker than Puruśa and is thus unable to bind Puruśa. If we accept the first probability, we will have to admit that Prakrti is asleep in Nirguńa Brahma or Brahmasvarúpa. But Prakrti does qualify Brahma at some stage. If She is in the state of sleep in Nirguńa Brahma, someone will have to wake Her up so that She may qualify Puruśa. In Nirguńa Brahma there are only Puruśa and Prakrti. There is no other entity, so only Puruśa can do it. But Puruśa, we know, is even incapable of realizing His own existence without being qualified by Prakrti. How can He then perform the function of awakening Prakrti? We have, therefore, to dismiss the possibility of Prakrti being asleep in Nirguńa Brahma, otherwise in the absence of any other entity, it would not be possible to rouse Prakrti to qualify Puruśa and to manifest him as buddhitattva. Prakrti is awake even in Nirguńa Brahma. She is not asleep. The quality, dharma or function of Prakrti is to qualify Puruśa, and if She is awake in Nirguńa Brahma, She must qualify Puruśa. Puruśa in Nirguńa Brahma is not qualified in spite of the presence of Prakrti, fully awake. That Prakrti is weaker than Puruśa in Nirguńa Brahma can be the only reason for this. She is less powerful and so is unable to qualify Puruśa. This is how Prakrti and Puruśa have

existed in Brahma for eternity. Puruśa, therefore, is by nature more powerful than Prakṛti and is the transcendental entity and Prakṛti is the innate principle. The state where Prakṛti is feebler than Puruśa and is incapable of influencing or qualifying Puruśa, is the state of Nirguṇa Brahma or Brahmasvarūpa, that is, the state where Puruśa in Brahma is not metamorphosed.

In the state of Brahma where Puruśa is not influenced or qualified by Prakṛti and hence Puruśa in Brahma remains unexpressed, Puruśa is called Nirguṇa Puruśa – Non-Qualified Consciousness – and where Puruśa is influenced and qualified by Prakṛti He is called Saguṇa or Guṇayukta Puruśa or the Qualified Consciousness. Saguṇa Brahma is therefore that stage of Brahma where Puruśa is influenced and qualified by Prakṛti.

This gives rise to two questions: First, if Nirguṇa Brahma is the Brahmasvarūpa or the supreme stage of Brahma then what could be Saguṇa Brahma? Secondly, if Puruśa is more powerful by nature, how could He be influenced and qualified by Prakṛti in Saguṇa Brahma? In other words, the question is how Saguṇa Brahma came into being.

Nirguṇa and Saguṇa are only two different states of Brahma. In the nirguṇa state Puruśa and Prakṛti both exist together, but Prakṛti is not able to qualify Puruśa. In the saguṇa state also Puruśa and Prakṛti exist together, but here Prakṛti influences and qualifies Puruśa. It is because of this difference in the relationship between Puruśa and Prakṛti that the former is called Nirguṇa and the latter is called Saguṇa Brahma. Rama asleep and Rama awake only indicate the two different states of existence of the same person. It does not mean that they are two different persons. Similarly Nirguṇa and Saguṇa Brahma are two different states of the same Brahma.

It was concluded earlier that buddhitattva comes into being as soon as unit consciousness is qualified by Prakṛti. Bhūmācaetanya, Parama Puruśa or Cosmic Consciousness is only a collective name for an infinite number of unit consciousnesses. Parama Puruśa must also follow the same principles or dharma as unit consciousness. The properties of the two must be the same, the only difference being that the scope of unit consciousness is finite, while that of Cosmic Consciousness is infinite. This must, therefore, mean that creation comes into existence as soon as Cosmic Consciousness or Parama Puruśa is influenced and qualified by Prakṛti. The stage where Puruśa is qualified by Prakṛti is Saguṇa Brahma. The universe is created because of Saguṇa Brahma.

We have to accept the existence of Saguṇa Brahma, as this creation which is formed from or which comes into being because of Saguṇa Brahma, can be seen at every moment of one's existence. This also shows that Prakṛti influences and qualifies Puruśa in Saguṇa Brahma. There can be only two conditions under which Prakṛti might influence Puruśa. Either Prakṛti in Saguṇa

Brahma is stronger than in Nirguña or Puruśa in Saguña is feebler than Prakrti. Prakrti, we know, is a special principle or unique force. She is present with the same intensity everywhere. She can be compared to any crude energy, for example, electricity. An electric current running through a mile-long wire will measure 440 volts at every point on the wire. The voltage will not be different at different points. Similarly Prakrti as a unique force, will always be present with the same strength everywhere. The question of Her being more powerful in Saguña Brahma does not arise. Puruśa in Saguña Brahma must then be weaker than Prakrti or else He could not be influenced by Prakrti. Puruśa is condensed as well as less condensed in the infinite Brahma. The consciousness of the infinite Brahma is not the same everywhere. Prakrti qualifies Puruśa finding Him feeble wherever consciousness or Puruśa is less condensed, and as a result of this creation springs forth.(1) Prakrti is helpless and cannot qualify Puruśa where consciousness is condensed. Puruśa is unqualified there and is called Nirguña Brahma – the Unqualified Cosmic Entity.

Brahma is infinite and Its supreme state is Nirguña. Wherever the infinite Puruśa (Consciousness) in Nirguña Brahma is less condensed, he is influenced by Prakrti and we find Saguña Brahma. Surely then Saguña Brahma is within Nirguña. Ahañtattva is like a huge iceberg in an ocean. Due to imbalance in climatic conditions, a part of the ocean gets frozen into an iceberg, but the rest of the water remains in its original state. In the same way, wherever, owing to the influence of Prakrti over Puruśa, He is less condensed in Nirguña Brahma, He is qualified and becomes Saguña Brahma, but the rest remains Nirguña. Saguña Brahma, therefore, is within Nirguña Brahma.

Saguña Puruśa or Qualified Consciousness is within Nirguña or Non-Qualified Consciousness. Where Puruśa is qualified by Prakrti it is called Saguña. We have seen earlier that the supreme state of Brahma or Brahmasvarúpa is Unqualified Consciousness. Saguña Brahma or Qualified Consciousness is therefore not the supreme state of Brahmasvarúpa, yet It has to be called Brahma as both Puruśa and Prakrti are present. What Saguña Brahma is can be explained by taking again the example of an iceberg in an ocean. Due to variation in the climatic conditions some of the water of the ocean changes into an iceberg. If we compare the ocean with Nirguña Brahma, the iceberg may be compared with Saguña Brahma. The ice is comparable to Puruśa in Saguña Brahma, and the climate which freezes the water to Prakrti. The unfrozen water of the ocean stands for Puruśa in Nirguña Brahma. The ice and the unchanged water of the ocean are two different forms of water only, the only difference being that climate at some places is able to change it into ice, while in other parts of the ocean the climate cannot change it into ice. Ice is only a changed form of water, but we cannot call it water; it has to be accepted as a changed form of water only. Similarly we cannot call Saguña Brahma the supreme state of Brahma or Brahmasvarúpa. It is only another state of Brahmasvarúpa. Hence for the realization of Brahmasvarúpa or the supreme state of Brahma we shall have to know Nirguña Brahma. The mere realization of Saguña Brahma will not lead us to the realization of the supreme state, for it is only another status of the supreme rank.

What then is Bhagaván, Saguña or Nirguña? Bhagaván is a Sanskrit word derived bhaga + matup; that is, the one who has bhaga is Bhagaván. Bhaga means absolute power, benevolence and light. Bhagaván therefore is that which is the most luminous, benevolent and omnipotent (jyotirmaya, maṅgalamaya and sarvashaktimán). So Bhagaván has these attributes or qualifications. Bhagaván thus is qualified Puruśa (Guñayukta). In Nirguña Brahma, Puruśa is not qualified. He is qualified in Saguña Brahma. Thus Bhagaván is only Saguña Brahma. It is Nirguña Brahma which is the supreme state of Brahma or Brahmasvarúpa. Brahma is only Its other status. Hence Bhagaván is not the realization of Brahmasvarúpa or the supreme state. To know Brahmasvarúpa one has to step beyond Bhagaván and has to realize Nirguña Brahma. It is that entity which is to be attained.

Footnotes

(1) The question why Puruśa is in a less condensed state or how long Prakṛti has been wanting to influence Puruśa does not arise. This is so because causal relation is only a mental action. Neither Cosmic Mind nor unit mind existed before Saguña Brahma. No Mahattattva, Ahañtattva, etc., were created. Hence the law of cause and effect (causal relation) did not exist. To investigate the cause of the creation of Brahma is thus beyond the scope of mind. It has been said in the Veda (Násadiiya Súkta) that even Brahma does not know the reason why It came into existence. This is absolutely true. We could not call Brahma non-causal if Brahma had known the cause of Its creation. Had Brahma not been causeless, It would have come within the scope of the law of cause and effect (causal relation) and It would have had to create other foregoing things which would have only marred Its infinite character.